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AUTHOR Savage, Grant T.
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ABSTRACT

In addition to assessing observed communication behaviors, this paper suggests that SYMLOG--a System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups--can be used by participant-observers as a foil for interpreting how their own value orientations affect their data collecting and theorizing. The first section of the paper examines the research role and experience of the participant-observer as one of being both near and distant from the social phenomenon being studied. The second section briefly reviews the theory of SYMLOG, which uses three orthogonal dimensions to describe the quality of the behavior of group members or the images suggested in the content of what they say: (1) Dominant vs. Submissive, (2) Friendly vs. Unfriendly, and (3) Instrumentally Controlled vs. Emotionally Expressive. The third section examines the SYMLOG coding procedures, and the fourth describes a study in which the coding procedures were used to score a meeting and the results compared to field notes of that meeting, illustrating the use of SYMLOG as an interpretive foil. (FL)

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The Use of SYMLOG as an Interpretive Foil for Participant Observer Research in Organizations

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Grant T. Savage
Assistant Professor
Area of Management
Texas Tech University
Box 4320
Lubbock, TX 79409
(806) 742-3902

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Abstract

In addition to assessing observed communication behaviors, SYMLOG may be used by participant-observers as a foil for interpreting how their own value orientations affect their data collecting and theorizing. As communication researchers withdraw from participation in an organization, they "naturally" begin to re-evaluate their participation and begin to recognize how their value-orientations caused them to selectively gather and interpret data. This reflexive process (phenomenological bracketing) is systematically aided by the use of SYMLOG interaction scoring.

To illustrate this technique, a naive coder's SYMLOG scoring of a meeting is compared with the author's field notes to that meeting. The author uses the SYMLOG scores to reconstruct his data and theorizing so that it is value-oriented.

The Use of SYMLOG as an Interpretive Foil for Participant Observer Research in Organizations

This paper is divided into four sections; the first section examines the research role and experience of the participant observer, delineating the essential tension experienced by the participant observer as one of being both near and distant from the social phenomenon being studied. The second section briefly reviews the theory and some of the methods associated with SYMLOG. The SYMLOG coding procedures used in this study comprise the third section. The fourth section compares the author's field notes with several SYMLOG image field diagrams, illustrating the use of SYMLOG as an interpretive foil.

Participant Observation: Between the Familiar and the Alien

Van Maanen (1979) has contrasted traditional social scientific research with participant observation research, noting that the latter attempts to "come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (p. 520). Douglas (1976), taking a similar tack, has characterized "the traditional goal of field research studies. . . [as that of arriving at knowledge of] situated experience--that is, social meanings, the way it looks to the members of society" (p. 189) who are the object of the researcher's investigation. In the words of Geertz (1973), researchers must strive to obtain "access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live" (p. 24) since that is the meaningful world that the researcher attempts to articulate. In short, participant observers attempt to account for the subjective views of participants; that is, researchers explicate the meaning of social life for the participants in a society (Bruyn, 1966).

Schutz (1967) points out that analyses incorporating the subjective point of view present two problems for the social sciences: (1) "How is it. . . possible to grasp subjective meaning scientifically?" (p. 35) and (2) "How is it. . . possible to grasp by a system of objective knowledge subjective meaning structures?" (p. 35). The answer to the first question, according to Schutz (1967), is fairly simple. The scientist does not construct thought objects that refer to the subjective meanings of unique individuals; rather, by particular methodological devices, the scientist constructs a model of a portion of the social world which deals with typified events that are relevant to the research problem the scientist is examining. This model, based on a particular problem, limits the data considered relevant, and it puts any contingent data beyond question through the use of appropriate methodological devices. Hence, the modeling process of the scientist relies on the selectivity imposed by a research question.

In order for the scientific problem to determine the structure of relevances, the scientist has to assume a disinterested stance toward the common-sense world. The individual in everyday life allows his personal biographical situation to determine his structure of relevances. During social interaction, this individual assumes that his motives are interlocked with those of his partners and the significance of events revolves around his "project at hand." In contrast, the scientist detaches himself from his biographical situation and replaces this structure of relevances with that body of knowledge constitutive of the scientific problem he is investigating. "In other words, the scientific problem is the "locus" of all possible constructs relevant to its solution, and each construct carries along--to borrow a mathematical

term--a subscript referring to the problem for the sake of which it has been established" (Schutz, 1967, p. 38).

The preceding methodological devices--assuming disinterestedness toward the common-sense world and relying on the selectivity of a scientific problem--allow the scientist to construct typical patterns of behavior which correspond to the observed behavior in the social world which is delimited by the research problem. The scientist, in turn, uses a third methodological device: he ascribes to the actors within his theory a certain consciousness that accounts for the patterns of behavior. The consciousness of the theoretical actor is limited "in such a way that its presupposed stock of knowledge at hand (including the ascribed set of invariant motives) would make actions originating from it subjectively understandable, provided that these actions were performed by real actors within the social world" (Schutz, 1967, p. 41).

One of the implications of Schutz' phenomenological analysis of social scientific research is that the participant observer necessarily must exercise both the methodological devices of scientific "alienation" and the social techniques of "familiarity," i.e., involvement in the day-to-day projects of other participants. Khare (1983) characterizes this dilemma as "between being near and distant." He analyzes this tension as the productive force of "native anthropology" since "these two tendencies, one of alienation and the other for remaining close to the nativity, work as mutually restraining forces, offering that tension that an anthropologist finds necessary and creative for his work" (Khare, p. 95).

The problem with being near and distant, being alien and familiar, is that an complementary relationship between the two types of

experience is very difficult to obtain or to sustain (see Burns, 1983 on the negative effects of sustained participant observation). Warren (1984), commenting about this problem of integration, notes that the participant observer must

> engage in a form of phenomenological bracketing--an attempt to put aside his or her own sense of the subjective and socially constructed nature of the world. . . . [Paradoxically,] what is 'bracketed,' in phenomenological terminology, is not the natural attitude itself, but the 'bracketing of the natual attitude' learned as a qualitative researcher. (p. 111)

Such second-order bracketing means that the researcher turns back, reflects upon how the experience of observation and participation reciprocally produced the significance he or she attributes to this experience. This "reflexion" normally occurs passively through the passage of time; the researcher leaves the research site, takes on new activities, and reflects upon the now "distant" experience of participant observation (Douglas, 1976; Rabinow, 1977; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). If the research is on-going, planned retreats from the site may be necessary for the participant observer to maintain the critical relationship between nativity and scientific insight.

Another method, though, is possible. The participant observer may use one or another of the techniques associated with SYMLOG to examine his or her value orientations, as well as those of other participants. By using SYMLOG as an interpretive foil, as an aid to gain insight about both their own and their subjects' implicit theorizing, the researcher may systematically engender a productive tension between being near and distant that otherwise might take months to occur.

SYMLOG: A Brief Review

SYMLOG is an acronym for a "SYstem for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups." This system uses three orthogonal dimensions to describe the quality of "the behavior of members or the images suggested in the content of what they say. The dimensions, described in terms of behavior adjectives are: (1) Dominant vs. Submissive, (2) Friendly vs. Unfriendly, and (3) Instrumentally Controlled vs. Emotionally Expressive" (Bales, Cohen, & Williamson, 1979, p. 9). The space created by the three dimensions is illustrated in Figure 1.

When using SYMLOG, information may be gathered in two ways: (1) group interaction may be rated retrospectively by one or more of the group members and/or by observers (this technique relies on an adjective check list), or (2) group interaction may be scored by one or more observers. Interaction scoring may be performed either during the group interaction or from recordings of the interaction. This last type of interaction scoring may rely on video tape recordings, audio recordings, or written transcripts.

Behaviors, Images, and Values

Interaction scoring of group interaction assesses three levels of "meaning": (1) the behaviors members display (what people express verbally or nonverbally), (2) the images that members evoke (what people say about various referents), and (3) the pro or con value judgements that members exhibit toward certain images (what attitudes people imply by what they say or do). Both behaviors and images may be scored on all three dimensions (e.g., UNF), on any two dimensions (e.g., DP), or on any one dimension (e.g., B). Values are scored as either P (PRO) or C (CON). The distinction between behaviors and images within SYMLOG is

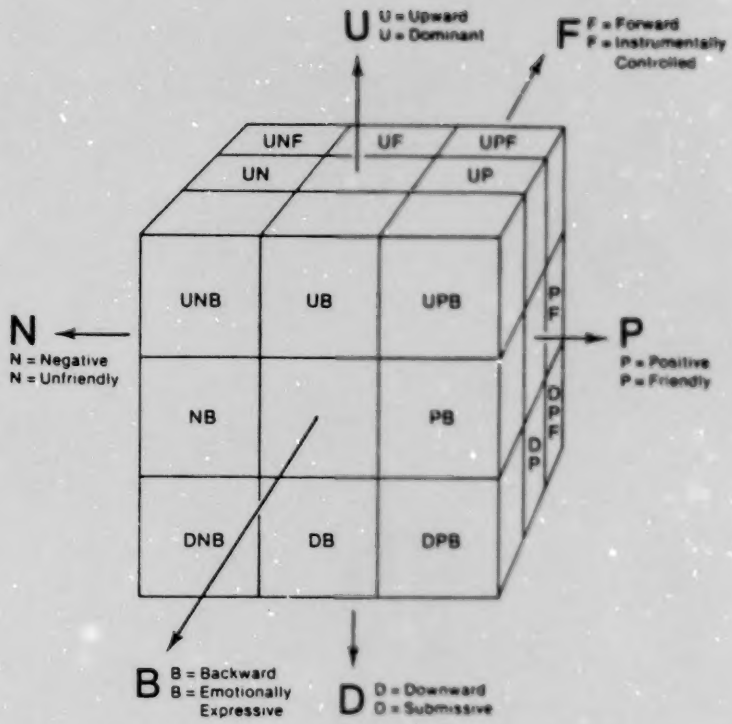


Figure 1. The SYMLOG three-dimensional space

analogous to the difference between relational and content messages (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967) since group member behavior often indicates how the image level of meaning is to be interpreted. This interpretation, in turn, is summarized within SYMLOG scoring as a value judgement about some referent (topic of discussion). Moreover, just as relational and content messages may be congruent or incongruent, so may SYMLOG behaviors and images be in discord or accord with one another.

Specifically, the first category of meaning (behavior) allows interaction scoring to focus on either nonverbal or verbal acts. The second category of meaning (images) distinguishes among six types of references.

> They are, briefly (1) references to (or descriptions of) the self, (2) references to the other, (3) references to the group as a whole, (4) references to the immediate external situation in which the group interaction takes place, (5) references to general features of the environing society, and (6) references to any kind of thing, real or imaginary, which the observer judges to be informative about the imagination and feeling of the person speaking, a class of content called fantasy images. (Bales, Cohen, & Williamson, 1979, p. 9)

Field Diagrams

SYMLOG scores may be viewed in graphic form by using either behavior or image field diagrams. The behavior field diagram (Figure 2) plots behavioral scores on the three dimensions, while the image field diagram (Figure 3) plots image scores on the three dimensions.

The circles plotted on the behavior diagram (Figure 2) represent the F-B and P-N behaviors of the participants in an interaction. In other

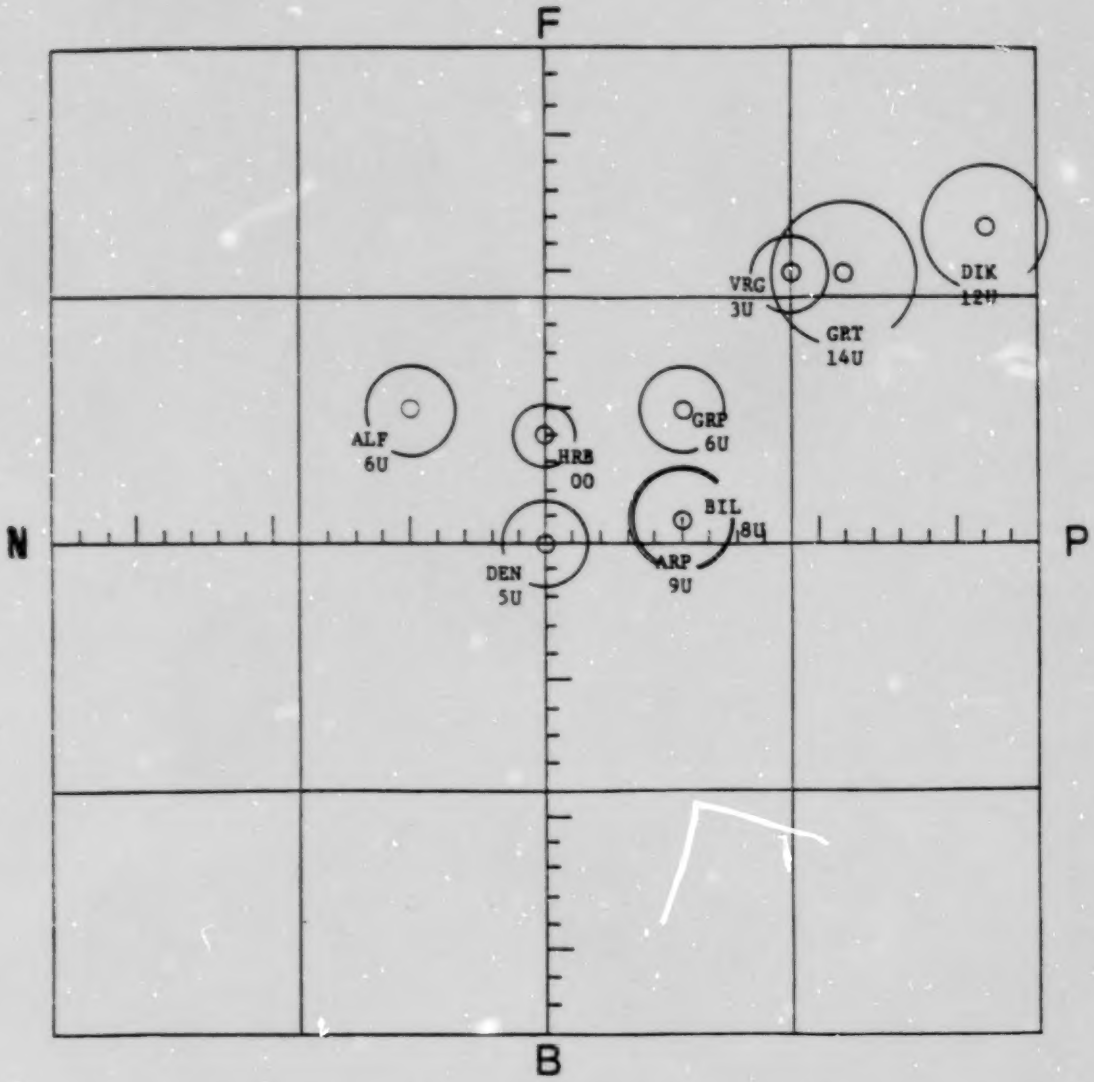
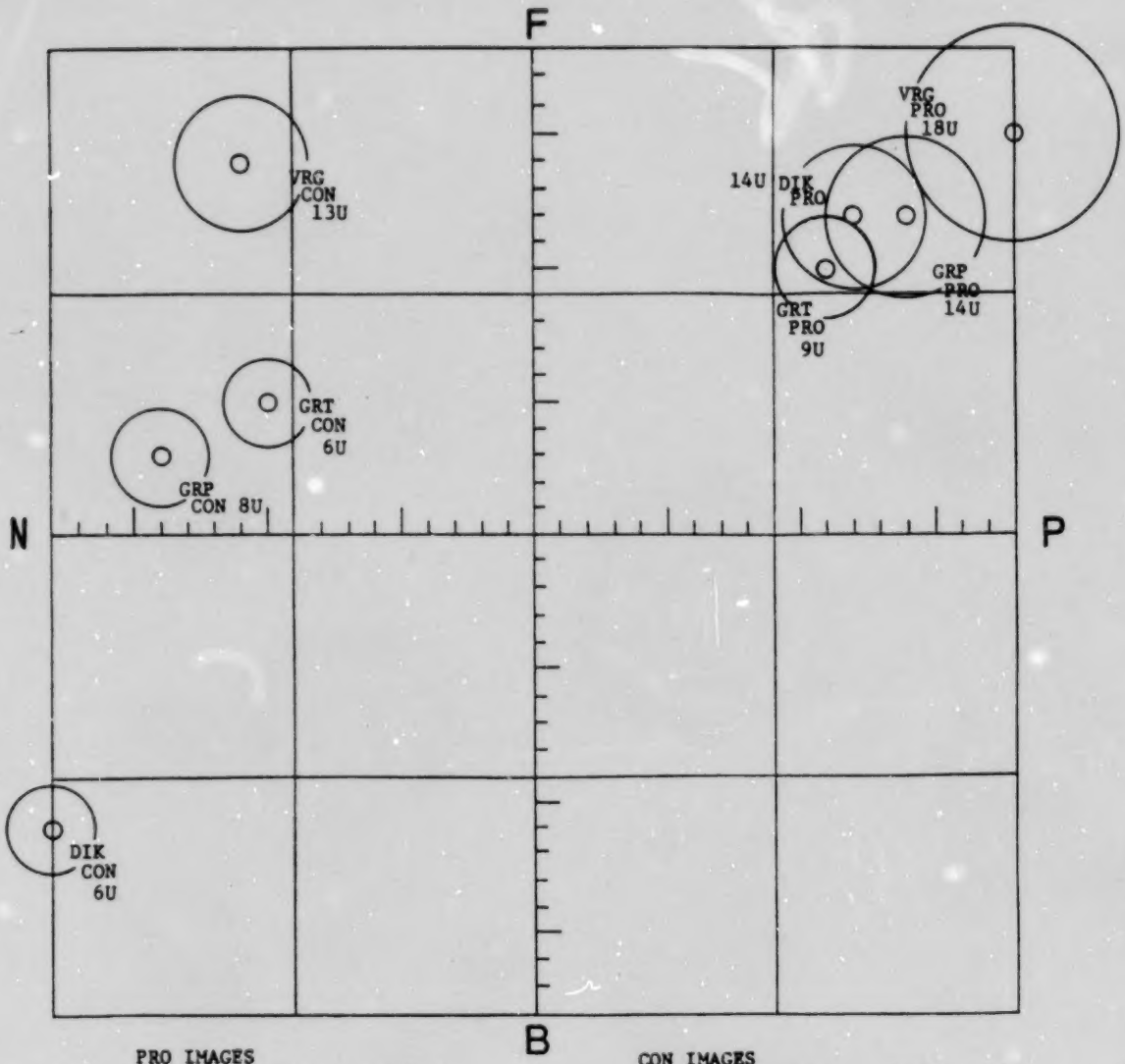


Figure 2. The SYMLOG behavior field diagram



PRO IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	8	4.0
VRG	16	4.2
GRT	4	4.0
GRP	28	4.1

CON IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	13	3.8
VRG	7	4.1
ARP	1	4.0
GRT	7	4.0
GRP	28	4.0

Figure 3. The SYMLOG image field diagram

words, the location of the circle on the behavioral field diagram portrays the degree to which each participant's behavior is instrumentally controlled (F or forward) vs emotionally expressive (B or backward) and/or friendly (P or positive) vs unfriendly (N or negative). The size of the circle (see the U-D number below the circle) corresponds to the degree of dominance or submission exhibited by each participant: The larger the circle (or U number), the more dominant the behavior of a participant; conversely, the smaller the circle (or the larger the D number) the more submissive the behavior of a participant.

In contrast, the image field diagram (Figure 3) plots each participant's attitude toward the content talked about during the interaction. As in the behavior field diagram, each plot is made in the three dimensional space. However, the circles in the image field diagrams represent the participants' images (PRO and/or CON) of the topic of conversation. Note that the average reference level (1-6) for each participant's image is indicated in the chart below the image field diagram.

Each type of field diagram is analogous to a photograph. Just as some photographs are snapshots and some are timed exposures, so also do the field diagrams vary in terms of time. A diagram may encompass an entire meeting by averaging all of the scores for each individual participant over that period of time. Or the meeting may be broken into smaller units of time, and field diagrams may be constructed for each time period.

Polarization and Unification

The use of image field diagrams allows one to graphically view how the group members form PRO and CON coalitions around images. Similarly,

the use of behavioral field diagrams show which group members behave differently and which behave similarly. If a group has two or more subsets of members who differ extensively in their images or behaviors (e.g., one subgroup is located in the UPF space, while another subgroup is located in the UNB space), the group is polarized. Conversely, a group is unified if all members may be located in roughly the same space, e.g., the UPF space. Bales and his colleagues (Bales, Cohen, & Williamson, 1979; Bales & Isenberg, 1982) argue that groups that are extremely polarized or unified will have difficulty accomplishing tasks: The polarized group is unlikely to reach an informal consensus on anything, while the unified group is likely to practice "groupthink," too readily agreeing to suggestions made by any group member.

SYMLOG Coding Procedures

In the analyses undertaken for this study, only verbal (speech) acts from a written transcript were coded using the SYMLOG categories for behaviors, images, and values. The coding procedure used in this study differed in many ways from the interaction scoring method described by Bales, Cohen, & Williamson (1979). For example, Bales and his colleagues usually score an interaction "live" and use a group of observers. These observers view the group interaction from behind one-way windows/mirrors. The observers do not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the interaction; they score only those behaviors and/or images which they sense are important. Moreover, each observer indicates a physical-time reference for each act and/or image scored so that a basis for comparing different observers' scores is provided. In contrast, the scoring procedure used in this study, being textually based, was more exhaustive. The transcript was scored by a single

(naive) observer who divided each person's utterances into one or more acts based upon changes in either the behaviors or images evoked by the transcribed utterance. Additionally, each act was assigned a sequential number so that SYMLOG scores could be mapped line-by-line on the transcript.

Recording and Transcription

The committee meeting was tape-recorded early in January, 1982 with the committee's prior approval. A single microphone was used so all voices were recorded on one track. Transcription of the tape-recording was done by a professional secretary who was instructed to punctuate pauses and to inscribe the conversations verbatim, including vocal disfluencies. The author produced the final transcripts; he identified the speakers using three-letter codes and corrected any errors in transcription.

Training

The coder was familiar with the group members since he had attended a number of committee meetings prior to the meeting that was coded. However, he was not present during the group's actual interaction, and he was privy to only a limited history of the group's discussion on the topics that were scored. The coder was trained by the author based on the SYMLOG descriptions and the instructions provided by Bales, Cohen, & Williamson (1979). The 20 hours of training concentrated on three objectives: (1) achieving consistency in identifying scoring units (acts) to be coded; (2) distinguishing between behaviors and images in an accurate manner; and (3) applying each of the three SYMLOG dimensions in a consistent manner to both behaviors and images.

Scoring Reliability and Validity

At the end of the training period, an excerpt from the transcript was scored by both the author and the coder to assess intercoder reliability for acts (units) scored. High intercoder reliability resulted: .90 using a Pearson R split-half test. While no formal (statistical) assessment of the coder's scoring validity was made before he began scoring, both the author and the coder spent considerable time examining and mutually justifying variations in the scoring of acts using the SYMLOG categories. Only after both were satisfied with their explanations did the coder proceed with the scoring of the transcript.

After the coder had scored the transcript, his scoring validity was assessed using procedures developed by Isenberg (1980) and Bales and Isenberg (1982) called the Behavioral Implications Task (BIT) and the Value Implications Task (VIT), respectively. The BIT and VIT tests assess those SYMLOG dimensions upon which the coder may be biased by comparing the coder's scores to an ideal set of scores on each combination of the SYMLOG dimensions. The results of these two tests showed that the coder was reasonably accurate (showed little tendency to distort behaviors or values) in his judgements.

Scoring Procedures

The interaction scoring form used by the coder is illustrated in Figure 4. The transcript was coded on the interaction scoring form as follows:

1. In the "Time" column, three-digit, ordinal numbers were placed so as to sequentially reference each act scored.
2. The code name of the participant currently speaking was placed in the "Who Acts" column.
3. The code name of the participant addressed by the speaker (or

SYMLOG

Interaction Scoring Form

Observer _____ Group_____ Date_____ Page_____

Draw a diagram of the physical location of group members on back of page 1.

Time	Who Acts	Toward Whom	Act/ Non	Direc- tion	Ordinary Description of Behavior or Image	Pro/ Con	Direc- tion	Image Level

Figure 4. The SYMLOG interaction scoring form

GRP, if addressed to the group as a whole) was indicated in the "Toward Whom" column.

4. Since only speech acts were considered, the "Act/Non" column was invariably marked "Act."
5. The location in the three dimensional space to which the behavioral act corresponded was indicated in the "Direction" column. In other words, the act was scored in terms of whether it was U or D, P or N, F or B. An act could be scored on all three dimensions (e.g., UNF), on any two dimensions (e.g., UN), or on any one dimension (e.g., U).
6. In the column labeled "Ordinary Description of Behavior or Image," the topic or reference for the speech act was described in ordinary language.
7. A "P" or "C" was placed in the "Pro/Con" column, thus designating whether the attitude toward the image was positive (P) or negative (C).
8. The "Direction" of the image was indicated in this column; the same procedures were followed as in step 5.
9. Lastly, the reference (levels 1-6) for the image was designated in the "Image Level" column. Image level 4 (situation), as an immediate reference to the context of the meeting, was used to index the topic under discussion by the committee.

Using SYMLOG as an Interpretive Foil: An Applied Case

The three parts to this section exemplify the use of SYMLOG as an interpretive foil for participant observation. The first part provides background information about the research site; the second part presents the field notes the author recorded after one particularly significant

meeting; the third part interprets these field notes in the light of three SYMLOG image field diagrams of that same meeting.

Background

The focus of this case is the decision-making that occurred in a Quality of Working Life (QWL) worksite committee (the DR committee). This committee is one of many committees within a QWL program which is supported by a large mid-western city and a labor union local. The author served as a third-party facilitator for the QWL program, and the DR committee was one of five worksite committees that he visited on a regular basis.

Worksite committees consist of both fixed (for key management and union roles) and elected positions (for supervisory and non-supervisory employees). Generally, the worksite manager and assistant manager have fixed positions, as do the union steward and a designated union assistant. The elected positions are more variable in nature: Each committee sets up guidelines for elections and determines what form of representation of the workforce should occur in the committee.

At the time this case occurred, members holding fixed positions on the DR committee were ALF (the plant manager), BOB (the assistant plant manager), VRG (the shop steward for the union local), and DEN (a designated member of the union). The eight elected members included the following actors:

Name	Work Area	Status
ARP	laboratory	supervisor II
BIL	plant maintenance	electrician
BIM	plant maintenance	stockroom clerk
CLY	ground maintenance	supervisor II

DIK	ground maintenance	supervisor I
GEN	plant maintenance	worker
HRB	laboratory	chemist
RPH	plant maintenance	supervisor II

For over two and 1/2 years the DR committee discussed a flextime schedule at its worksite, but in the course of only one meeting it decided to disband the subcommittee which was investigating the flextime schedule. The chair of the flextime subcommittee (VRG) immediately challenged this decision at a division level QWL meeting. He argued that some members had not had a chance to openly voice their opinions at the meeting, and he requested that the division-level committee order the DR committee to reconsider their decision. As a result of VRG's request, the DR committee readdressed the issue of flextime and reaffirmed its original decision. Since the focus of the remainder of this part is the original meeting in which the flextime subcommittee was disbanded, only a few of the 20 committee meetings, subcommittee meetings, and fact finding missions in which flextime was discussed and/or actions were taken are reviewed.

During the summer of 1981, the DR committee heatedly discussed flextime a number of times. As the facilitator for the committee, the author suggested that (a) many of the disagreements voiced in the committee were based on assumptions about the flextime programs operated at another worksite (MR) and (b) inviting representatives from the MR worksite to discuss flextime would be the best way to settle the apparent disagreements. Although the MR committee declined the invitation extended by the DR committee, the MR committee did invite a taskforce from the DR committee to visit the MR worksite in order to

observe the flextime program in operation.

Following up on this invitation, the DR committee made two separate visits to the MR worksite. The first visit in October was conducted by BIL and VRG (both union representatives), while the second visit in November was conducted by DIK and RPH (management representatives). The author accompanied both groups on the two visits. Two very different accounts of the MR flextime program then were made by DIK, the author, and VRG during the December, 1981 DR committee meeting.

DIK reported that the flextime program at MR caused at least two problems. First, the crew overlap that occurred in the program (due to men and supervisors arriving at any time between 6:00 and 8:30) produced employee-supervisor conflict: some crew members resented supervision from more than one immediate supervisor. Second, the day-to-day, variable-starting-time flextime schedule resulted in many employees arriving early rather than late in the morning, and it meant that only a skeleton crew was present during the late afternoon. Supporting DIK's report, the author cited some more specific examples of problems with the flextime program. VRG was left rather undone by these reports. He noted that on the first visit the MR supervisors had positively evaluated the flextime program, but they must not have been willing to say anything negative about the program to non-supervisory personnel. The author agreed that the MR management team had disclosed different information.

The committee's discussion then focused on what form of flextime might be appropriate for the MR plant. DIK and VRG argued about the merits of the MR flextime program, and interrupted each other continually. This led ALF and other group members to discuss other

committees' plans for flextime programs. A number of "side" conversations irrupted during this discussion; for example, BIL and VRG argued over the chairmanship of the flextime sub-committee (VRG eventually agreed to act as chair). BIL then interjected a few jokes about flextime, and the committee agreed to table discussion on flextime.

Although the DR committee's discussion of flextime culminated in an explicit agreement to table flextime, this agreement relied on different implicit understandings of what was meant by "tabling." For example, the author's understanding of the agreement was that BIL and VRG should survey the workforce about flextime. But, as the author learned later, ALF (plant manager) understood this agreement to mean that flextime would be tabled until another worksite committee implemented and evaluated a flextime program; conversely, BIL and VRG understood it to mean that discussion would continue once employee interest was shown in flextime.

After this meeting, the author arranged to meet with BIL and VRG during the third week in December to construct a questionnaire to survey employee interest in flextime. When they met, BIL and VRG expressed their reluctance to survey employee opinion since they believed that employees had too many misconceptions about flextime and needed to be "educated" before their opinion was sampled. Nevertheless, the author urged them to construct a questionnaire and fulfill the mission they had been assigned by the committee since it was the most "politically" adept move for them. Unfortunately, the author had little time to spend with them (approximately an hour), and not much was accomplished at this meeting.

A follow-up meeting during the last week in December was held with another facilitator (B) who suggested that BIL and VRG ask the committee for permission to hold a general meeting or series of smaller meetings to discuss flextime with the workforce. Flextime was the first item on the agenda for the January, 1982 meeting of the committee, and the author's field notes for that meeting are presented next.

Field Notes

DIK opened the meeting, asking if there were any corrections of the minutes. BIL (who was recently elected secretary, replacing BIM) had taken the minutes, and he dramatized his role by getting out of his chair, lifting it as if to ward off an attack of wild cats, and asking if there were any corrections in a bold, challenging voice. Everyone laughed quite loudly, and ALF made a point of complimenting BIL on the succinctness of his minutes (they filled only one page, and were very brief). No corrections were offered, and the minutes were approved.

There was then a difficult transition by DIK as he attempted to bring up the concern of the flextime subcommittee (BIL and VRG). Finally, after an hesitant introduction, VRG cut in and made the first of several statements by BIL and himself about courses of action they desired the committee to endorse. These actions were, ideally, for the 23 members of the work crew to be convened, sometime in the next month, to hear a presentation on flextime and/or other alternative work schedules (I suggested "A" for this honor). After hearing about flextime, the workers could then vote on whether they wished to investigate/participate in a flextime program.

This proposal was not quickly grasped by the committee, and a number of counter-proposals were offered by DIK and other members. These

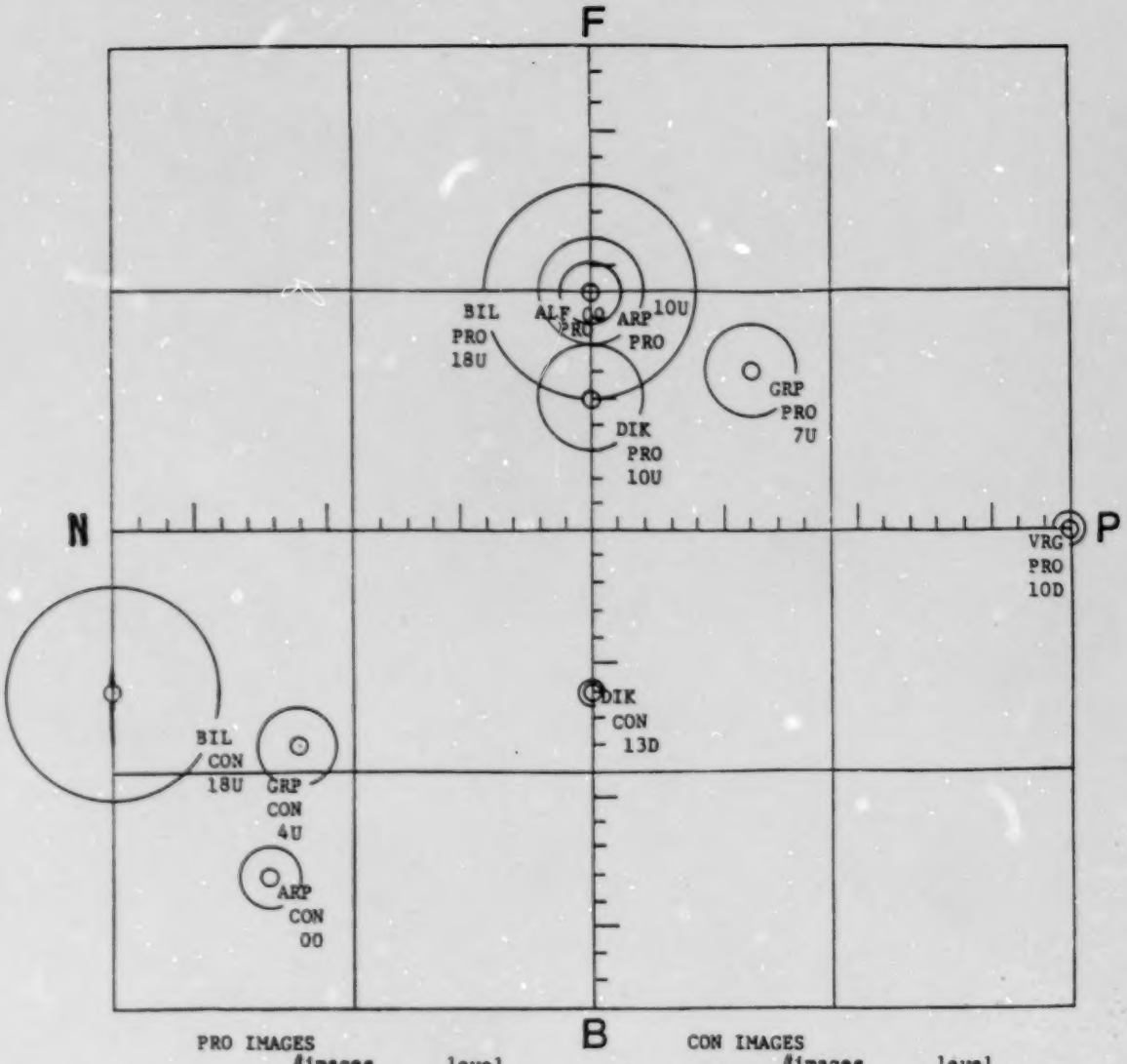
alternative proposals included the following:

1. Postponing or tabling any action on flextime until such time as the MR flextime program was evaluated (I quickly undermined this proposal by noting that MR's experiment was evaluated and already implemented);
2. Surveying the work crews to see their interest in participating in a flextime program;
3. Disbanding the flextime subcommittee.

The latter proposal (number 3) was voted on by the committee using voice count, and it was passed by four votes "aye" and no "nay" votes, even though all members except BIM were in attendance. I may have played a major role in forcing the vote since DIK asked me to voice my opinion about the course of action the committee should take. I advocated that the committee either support BIL and VRG's proposal or disband the committee. As I put it, the subcommittee had reached its level of frustration, and wanted either a go-ahead for some action or to drop the whole thing.

Reinterpretation

For the sake of simplicity, only three image field diagrams of the January, 1982 DR committee meeting (based on the SYMLOG interaction scoring of the actual transcript of the meeting) are interpreted. The first diagram (Figure 5) indicates the PRO and CON images toward flextime and other references that the participants displayed during the opening stages of the meeting. The second diagram (Figure 6) displays the images evoked by participants about half-way through the discussion of flextime. The author is not included in the first or the second diagram (Figures 5 and 6) since the coder decided that the author had



PRO IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	3	3.0
BIL	6	3.2
ALF	1	4.0
VRG	1	4.0
ARP	1	4.0
GRP	12	3.6

CON IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	3	3.0
BIL	4	3.8
ARP	2	2.5
GRP	9	3.1

Figure 5. Image field diagram:
Beginning of meeting

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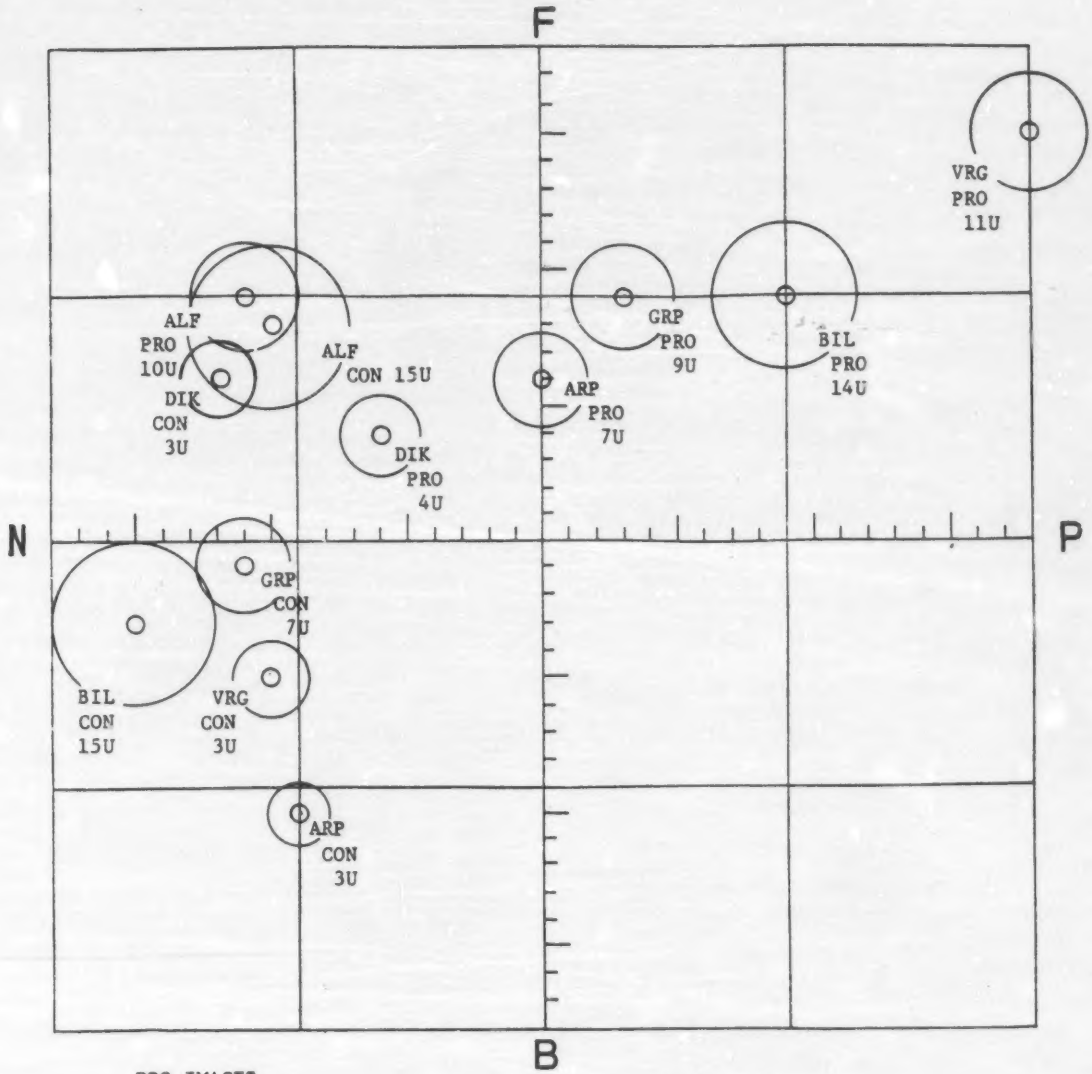
not expressed any value judgements during these portions of the conversation. The last image field diagram (Figure 7) summarizes the discussion of flextime, and includes each participant that the coder recorded as expressing a PRO or CON image (the author is identified as "GRT").

Figure 5. The first image field diagram illustrates that the participants are expressing values about different referents; a glance at the level indicator shows that DIK and BIL are expressing PRO images about the group (committee), while ALF, VRG, and ARP are expressing PRO images about the situation (flextime). Similarly, the level indicator for CON images shows that BIL's image refers mainly to flextime, DIK's image refers to the group, and ARP's image refers to both the group and an individual. The most striking feature about this diagram is that the PRO images are clustered in the Positive and Forward (PF) space, while the CON images are clustered in the Negative and Backward (NB) space. Moreover, both sets of images (PRO and CON) show more or less polarization upon the Upward (dominance) and Downward (submission) dimension.

Figure 6. The next figure displays a very intriquing polarization upon the P/N dimension within the set of PRO images. This polarization is particularly strong between ALF (the plant manager) and VRG (the union steward). However, this polarization may be somewhat neutralized by the different references that ALF and VRG evoke; although both ALF and VRG's previous set of images referred to flextime, it is clear from the level indicator that some of their images in the meantime have referred to the group or, possibly, an individual. In contrast, DIK's images have increasing referred to flextime, while BIL's images have



PRO IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	12	3.8
BIL	11	3.3
ALF	9	3.7
VRG	21	3.5
ARP	1	4.0
GRP	54	3.6

CON IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	13	3.7
BIL	15	3.5
ALF	8	3.6
VRG	7	3.4
ARP	4	2.8
GRP	47	3.4

Figure 6. Image field diagram:
Middle of meeting

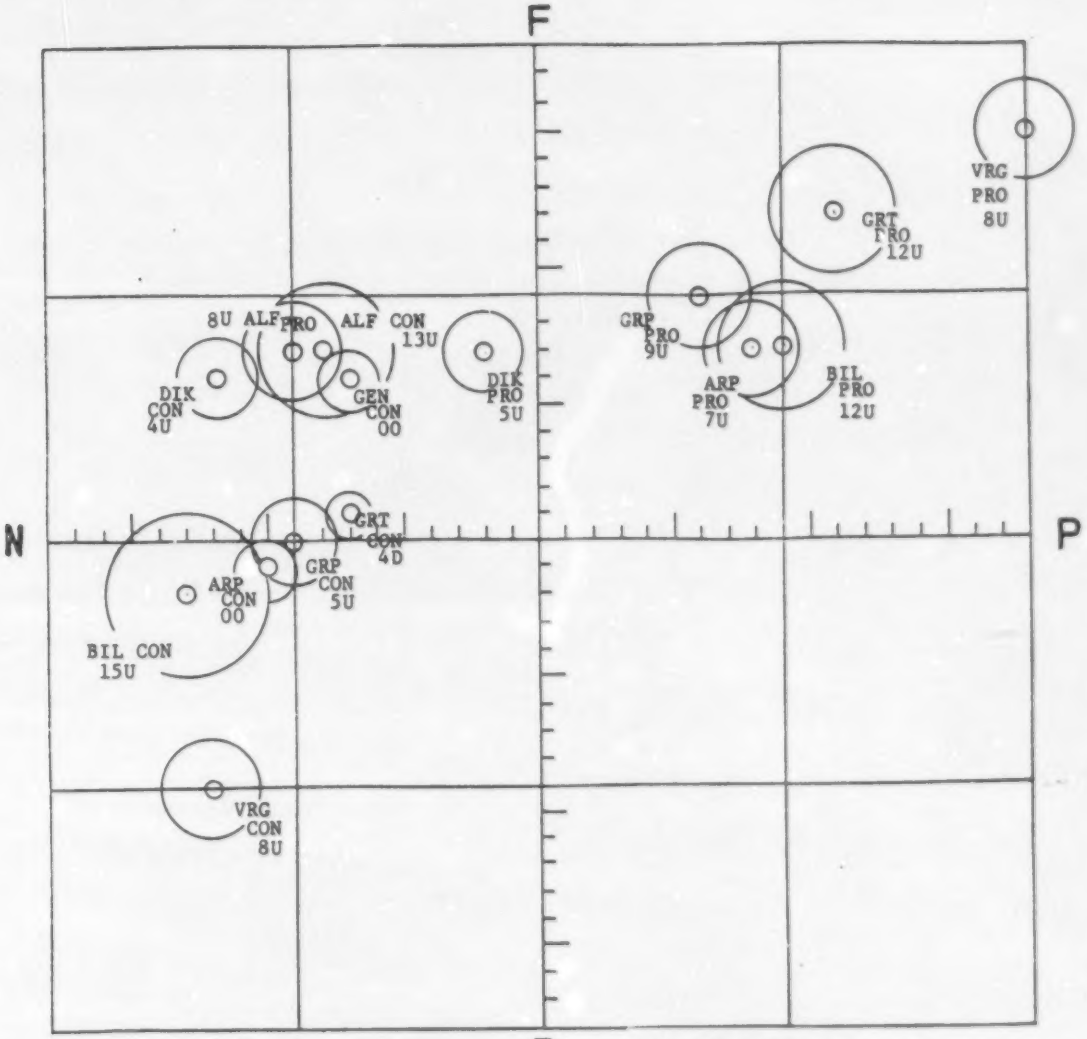
remained fixed upon the group.

The CON images in Figure 6 also display polarization, but in this case upon the F/B dimension. Again, differing references for these images muddy the waters of straightforward interpretation. DIK, ALF, and BIL seem to be evoking images of flextime, while ARP and VRG are refering to the group; this confounding of references weakens the apparently strong polarization of CON images within the committee.

One interesting feature of this image field diagram is that both ALF and DIK's PRO and CON images are located in UNF space, the same space associated with authoritarianism.

Figure 7. The last image field diagram summarizes the committee's discussion of flextime; here, the author's (GRT) contribution to the conversation becomes apparent. During the second half of the meeting, the author contributed the greatest total number of PRO images. His imagery referred to the group as highly UPF--an image that was similar to that expressed by ARP, BIL, and VRG. The reference for ALF and DIK's UNF PRO images, in contrast, was flextime. This difference in the reference of the image seems to account for the P/N polarization within the set of PRO images.

The author also contributed a large number of CON DNF images about flextime; however, he was the only participant to evoke images of flextime in that space. Both DIK and ALF expressed CON UNF images of flextime, while GEN evoked CON NF images of flextime. This difference in the vectors of the CON images associated with flextime suggests that the polarization of CON images upon the F/B dimension was caused largely by the author's contributions. Indeed, VRG, BIL, and ARP's CON UNB images are associated more with the group than with flextime.



PRO IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	18	3.6
BIL	13	3.4
ALF	9	3.7
GRT	17	3.0
VRG	30	3.5
ARP	5	3.2
GRP	92	3.4

CON IMAGES

	#images	level
DIK	22	3.8
BIL	19	3.2
ALF	9	3.7
GRT	12	3.8
VRG	17	2.9
ARP	9	3.4
GEN	6	4.0
GRP	94	3.6

Figure 7. Image field diagram:
End of meeting

Discussion. The author's field notes imply that he felt he had unduly influenced the vote to disband the flextime subcommittee. To some degree, certainly, he did influence the committee. However, the SYMLOG image field diagrams suggest that the author's influence was mitigated by the different image levels being expressed by the participants. Since BIL and VRG's images refer to the committee, while ALF and DIK's refer to flextime, an interpretation of the meeting emerges that differs from the one originally proffered by the author. The author's images show that he valued flextime in a different way than did BIL or VRG. Moreover, the author's identification with BIL and VRG's image of the committee probably distorted his perception of how they valued flextime--in other words, he confounded their valuation of the committee with his own valuation of flextime. Hence, rather than the committee being polarized upon the issue of flextime, it would seem that the committee was attempting to redefine its member relations through a discussion of this issue.

Such an interpretation accounts for BIL and VRG's emphasis upon group-related images, as well as ALF and DIK's intriquing CON and PRO NF images of flextime. ALF and DIK's position upon the flextime issue indicates their symbolic status within the committee, while BIL and VRG's PRO and CON images indicate where they would like to see the leadership in the committee.

Interestingly, this interpretation fits fairly well within the incidences that occurred following the committee's decision to disband the flextime subcommittee. VRG and BIL both emerged as stronger leaders within the committee, and the committee began to embrace new projects with renewed vigor. That, however, is another tale.

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